

INFORMATION

Seventh National Conference on Rural Health

Leaders in health throughout the United States met in Denver, February 27 to March 1, for the seventh National Conference on Rural Health sponsored by the Council of the same name of the American Medical Association. Representatives of farm groups (the American Farm Bureau, the National Grange, the Agricultural Extension Service) and of labor groups, and health educators met with medical leaders in rural areas to discuss formally and informally problems of mutual concern.

An entire day preceding the formal conference was taken up with the discussion of "The Physician as a Citizen." Many ideas, mostly constructive but some critical, were expressed. It appeared, however, that the discussion was mutually profitable. The valuable contribution of the health educator was demonstrated by the description of activities in several rural areas, particularly North Carolina, where the health educator, working with the physician, has done much to improve the general health status. Medical service has likewise been improved as the result of these activities.

A great deal of stress was laid upon the importance of the development of State Rural Health Councils. Several states have advanced to a considerable degree in promoting better health and medical service to areas, purely as the result of the mutual contributions of interested groups. In many areas physicians working with the public health department and the agricultural extension service, have succeeded in bringing order out of chaos for the benefit of all concerned.

It is noteworthy that in all the discussions the consensus of opinion was that progress could and should be made through individual effort starting at the grass roots. Collectivistic effort in the form of governmental intervention and control was universally frowned upon. Farm representatives in particular were vocal in their disavowal of governmental assistance. It was the consensus that no one

organization could be held responsible for the success or failure of a program and that only through the combined efforts of all giving personally of their time and money could success be achieved.

The trials and tribulations facing a young general practitioner entering a small rural community were colorfully described by Dr. Kenneth Kaisch of Philip, South Dakota. He described the hurdles to be encountered by a doctor of medicine in a sparsely settled rural community and how success and satisfaction could be gained by the doctor entering into the spirit of the community as a total citizen as well as the dispenser of medical service.

The conference was highlighted and honored by the presence of, as well as the addresses given by, two outstanding United States citizens. Dr. John Cline, president of the American Medical Association, addressed the entire conference, as did Mr. Allan Kline, president of the American Farm Bureau. Their messages were enthusiastically received.

Homage was paid to Dr. Albert C. Yoder in the closing hours of the session. Doctor Yoder was designated the general practitioner of the year during the last meeting of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association. He is 84 years of age and still practicing medicine in Indiana. It appeared that everyone caught the spirit of this fine gentleman's contribution.

California's representatives included Frank Doughty, M.D., who is a member of the A.M.A.'s Council on Rural Health; Andrew Bone, Director of Direct Services Department of the California Farm Bureau; Carroll Andrews, M.D., of Sonoma, a member of the California Medical Association's Committee on Rural Health; John C. Dement, M.D., San Francisco; Dwight Murray, M.D., Napa, and Henry A. Randel, M.D., Fresno.

HENRY A. RANDEL, M.D., *Chairman,*
C.M.A. Committee on Rural Health.

